

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 9, 11, 13-16 and 18 are amended, and claims 19 and 20 are added. The claims are amended to address the 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph rejection. In addition, features removed from the last clause of claims 1 and 11 are recited in claims 19 and 20, respectively. Applicant submits that the amendments do not narrow the claims.

I. Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner is requested to consider the reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,704,095) identified in the attached Information Disclosure Statement.

II. All Pending Claims are Patentable

Claims 1-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The claims have been amended to eliminate the objected-to words identified in the Office Action. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-12 and 15-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,266,389 to Murayama et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Murayama et al. has a U.S. filing date of September 14, 1999. The present application is a divisional of Application No. 10/208,033, which in turn is a divisional of Application No. 09/259,137, which has a U.S. filing date of February 26, 1999. Accordingly, and contrary to what is stated in the Office Action, the present application has a U.S. filing date (February 26, 1999) that is prior to the September 14, 1999 U.S. filing date of Murayama et al. Thus, Murayama et al. does not qualify as a reference against this application. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

III. Petition to Accept Unintentionally Delayed Claim for Priority

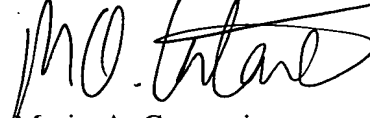
Upon becoming aware of the relationship between the Murayama et al. reference and at least some of the claims of the present application, due to the Examiner's citation of Murayama et al. in the April 7 Office Action, Applicant realized that the present application should have claimed priority from the Japanese priority application of Murayama et al. Thus, Applicant files herewith the attached Petition to Accept Unintentionally Delayed Claim for Priority, along with a certified copy of the additional priority document (Japanese Patent Application No. 10-260170) and an updated Declaration signed by the inventor and referencing the additional priority document. Grant of the Petition is earnestly solicited.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Mario A. Costantino
Registration No. 33,565

MAC/ccs

Attachments:

Information Disclosure Statement
Petition to Accept Unintentionally Delayed Claim for Priority
Certified Copy of Japanese Application No. 10-260170
Executed Updated Declaration

Date: June 29, 2004

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